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MEMORIES FROM THE HOLOCAUST

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1997

This story is not a horror story, like some of the Holocaust survivors told or wrote. My story is a part of my life during the Holocaust years. I had the need to tell it. If only one person will read it or listen to the tape, it will have served its purpose, and I'll be able to die in peace.

I had some happy and some sad moments in my childhood. We had anti-Semitism in Poland, before the war. For me it started in the Polish elementary school, I went to. There was only one other Jewish girl in my class, and she was my best friend. When the gentile boys started learning about their religion, they began to harass us. They taunted us by repeating what they were taught, that "the Jews killed Jesus". They harassed us in many ways, and made our life miserable.

There was a pogrom in our town, not long before the war, Polish people did it. They broke all the windows in our house. Whenever they approached our building, they threw stones. We were all hiding, so the stones wouldn't hit us. Only my father was standing near the window, behind the curtain. Every time they were passing by, my father warned us. He shouted, "they are coming", and "boom" you heard shattered glass falling all over the floor.

But, there were many happy moments in my childhood; I remember visits to my grandmother in another town. I remember going with my mother and my sisters, to the fields and the hills, to pick wild strawberries. I remember having friends and playing with them outside, learning how to ride a bike.

There was one sad episode, when I learned that my paternal grandfather died. I remember the first day of school, and being a good student, my teacher liked me very much, even that she was anti-Semitic. She used to take me to her home and praise me in front of her daughter. When my father went to my school to ask about my progress, she said to him "you don't have a child, you have a gem". My father was very proud of me.

There was also a happy occasion in our family. My oldest sister Zlatka's wedding. I was nine years old. I remember the "Sheva-Brachot" celebration, that took place in her new home, and I remember embroidering a few things for her trousseau. All these happy memories, kind of embrace me now, and I feel such warmth inside me. But like ~~when~~ a bubble bursts, that's how my childhood ended. When World War II broke out, I remember that day very well. I want to write about it the way I experienced and remember it.

It was Friday, September 1, 1939. We saw German planes flying over our town in Poland. Everybody at home was very upset. I at the age of eleven, did not fully understand what was going on. My parents did not know what to do, whether to stay home or run away. Finally they decided to go away, like many other people did. We left the next day, after Shabbat. Our family, including my sister Zlatka and her husband Shaul joined us, as did my Uncle Jakob, his wife Sala and their two children, Natek and Berta. We walked, till we arrived in Hadowice. Over there we met friends from our town. They hired a man with a big wagon and took all of us with them.

I don't remember every step of our journey, we were away four weeks from our home, till the Germans caught up with us. We were riding, or walking through a forest mostly, because on the open roads the Germans were throwing bombs. One day, I remember they threw bombs in the forest, not far from us, but we were lucky, the bombs never reached us. We also avoided going by train. The people that went by train, many of them got killed or wounded. We drove only during the day, at night we stayed with Jewish people. They always let us sleep over. We had some money, so we could buy food from Polish peasants. We went like that, till we got to Tarnograd. Tarnograd was

a shtetl, the population was made up of mostly Hassidic Jews. We stayed there a few days only.

On erev Rosh Hashana the Germans invaded the town. I was on the main street, when the Germans entered. The Hassidic Jews greeted the invaders with flowers. I was shocked and amazed. How can a Jew greet a German with flowers? Were they so naïve? I think they hoped to appease the Germans this way. Going to the place we stayed, I had to go up the hill. Suddenly I hear "Halt", which means stop in German. I turned around and saw a Jewish boy running and a German soldier behind him. The poor boy was so scared, he didn't stop, and the German soldier took out ^Arevolver and shot him dead.

My mother got some food and decided to cook a meal for the Holidays. When it was done, my father said to my mother "Let's eat it tonight, because we don't know what will be tomorrow". There was some prophecy in his words.

We were too many people to be accommodated in one house, so half of us slept in one house and the other half in another house. At night while we were sleeping, all of us in one room, the Germans came with flashlights and looked in our windows. We were terrified, we didn't know what they wanted to do to us. My father started to recite the "Shema", I can still hear his voice, saying slowly "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One". We were lucky again this time, they just looked into the windows and went away. We decided to go back home the next morning. Some people told us, we wouldn't be able to leave, because the Germans surrounded the town. We didn't listen and left in the morning, and it's good thing that we didn't listen.

On the road we heard that, the next night the Germans burned the town. We didn't know what happened to all the Jews. Years later we found out that most of the Jews were killed. I don't remember if we walked, or if one of the peasants took us in his wagon. Once we tried to board a train, it was a cattle train and we had to sit on the floor, suddenly, a German in a uniform came and asked in a loud voice "Juden sind da?" "Are any Jews here?" We were very frightened, but my father, who shaved off his beard, and

wore a regular suit, was brave enough to answer him "Keine Juden da" ("There are no Jews here"). The German believed my father and went away, but before he left, he saw a gentile with a beard and took him off the train. There were no incidents after that, and we could continue our journey, till we got home. When we arrived home, who greeted us? It was our cat, he was happy to see us, and so were we.

We were glad to be home. I even went to school, but after a few days they told us not to come any more. Jewish children are forbidden to go to school. My father was a very educated man, and knew many languages. He was an ordained Rabbi, but he did not have a congregation. He was a merchant by profession. He gave me lessons in a few subjects, at least I was busy.

The first restriction was, no school, slowly came others. We were ordered to wear a white armband, with a blue Star of David. Later on, they changed it to a yellow Star of David to wear on the chest. Every day the men had to register with the Germans. The younger ones had to go to work, to sweep the streets, and do all kinds of manual work. The food was rationed. They burned our synagogue. The Jews were not allowed to make a living, but if was still good, because we were home, and most of the family were together.

My sister Yetka was in Krakow, and together with her husband (she was married during the war in Krakow) was about to leave to the part of Poland that belonged to Russia. My brother Wrumek was in the Polish Army before the war, and fled later to Russia. He even wrote letters, and sent us food packages. My father learned Russian very fast, and corresponded with him in Russian.

Jews from Bielsko were sent to our town, Kenty, and we had a lot of newcomers. We made friends with some of them. Before the war I had a friend, who lived in the house next to mine, we continued to play together. In the same building lived a German officer. One night when we were asleep, he got drunk. He came straight to our house

with a flashlight, we were so scared, finally, he realized he made a mistake. He thought it was his home, he even apologized.

^{HE}
~~He~~ needed money to buy food. My father had some connections, through these connections he'd get some merchandise, which was leather. He endangered his life, by doing it. He had to do it in order to buy food for us, so we wouldn't starve, but if the Germans would had caught him, they would had killed him.

I remember there were a few steps leading to the attic. He opened one of the steps, and that's where he kept the leather. We lived in a corner house and occupied the whole upper floor. Our house had many windows, when a customer came to buy leather, at each window a child would be on the lookout. If somebody suspicious was approaching, my father quickly hid the leather inside the step.

We had some relatives in Chrzanover Ghetto, when we were still in Kenty. They asked us to buy food and to send it to them. They still had money, but could not buy any food there. With the money they sent, I used to buy food, make packages and send them to Chrzanov. I think I did it, till we were sent to Nowa Wies Ghetto.

Some young people from Bielsko founded a club. My older sister Mala and I belonged to it. It was more like an organization, it was Zionistically oriented. We got together once in a while, of course we had to hide it from the Germans.

There was an incident in our family. My Uncle Jakob went to buy some food, and a German on a bike caught him. To punish him, he tied him to his bike, and pulled and dragged him down a high hill. Thank God, he survived the ordeal.

My sister Bella became ill with appendicitis, when we were in Kenty. A doctor treated her, but in the end, she had to have surgery. She had to be transported to a hospital in Sosnowiec, which was not easy. You can imagine the conditions in a Jewish hospital, at the time when Jews ^{Did} were treated inhumanly. The operation was successful, but they not

let her stay to recuperate. She was sent home in a wagon, in which the very long ride home for her was a painful agony. She was lucky; she became ill, while we were still home.

We lived in Kenty, till the end of 1941. Then the Germans made a ghetto in a village called Nowa Wies. They transferred all of us there. The village of Nowa Wies was 9 kilometers from Auschwitz. At that time the Germans kept political prisoners there, but we knew what was going on in Auschwitz.

We were in Nowawies a few months only. Every gentile family, who had a house, had to accommodate one Jewish family. We got one and a half room in one part of the village, and our sister Zlatka with her husband got a room at the other end of the village. But we could visit each other.

In the spring of 1942, every Jew had to work. Everyone had to have a "Arbeitskarte", a certificate of work. Our whole family had to commute to work every day to Wadowice, which was quite a distance. I was the only one that didn't work as I was still a child, and was allowed to stay home. I had no friends and was very lonely, but we were still lucky we were together. On rare occasions, my sister Mala and I tried to sing. My father always reminded us, "How can you sing, while in other places Jews are being killed?" But we were still children and we couldn't live in such despair.

While still in Nowa Wies, we got news that my maternal grandfather died. Instead of being sad, we were glad he died a natural death, and was not sent to a Death camp. We received a letter from my brother Wrumeck, who was once in Russia. He was now in Lwov, Russian occupied Poland. He heard that my sister Yetka with her husband Lolo were in Lwov, and wanted to be with them. He left Russia, but when he arrived in Lwov, my sister was gone. The Russians sent her to Siberia.

We had an Aunt Ròzia with her family, living in Kalush, not far from Lwov. My brother stayed with them for while. The next letter that came from him contained bad news.

When the Germans invaded the Russian part of Poland, they took all the Jews to a forest and killed them, among them was Aunt Rozia her husband and two of their sons. One son had made Aliya to Palestine before the war. We met him in Israel. We used to see each other once in a while. The other news from my brother was better, he wrote that a Ukrainian man saved him, and he was sent to a labor camp. He even met a girl and they got engaged. Not long after that ^{YE} ~~he~~ left Nowa Wies. My brother and his fiancée did not survive. Till today, we don't know what happened to both of them.

There were rumors that we will be deported, my father wanted to save himself, and escaped to a forest. He stayed there a couple of days, but realized he wouldn't be able to survive without help. There was nobody to help.

Then in the middle of July, 1942, the SS came. They surrounded every house where Jews lived. It was towards evening, and they let us stay until the morning. I remember my mother staying up up almost all night preparing and cooking food to take with us. In the morning they assembled all the Jews, and took us to an "Umschlagplatz", a gathering place. Before we left home, the Polish landlady came in and started to take our belongings. Couldn't she wait until we were gone? The Poles were watching us, while we marched to the "Umschlagplatz". I don't think they felt sorry for us. I saw only one woman crying, and she was married to a Jew.

Before we were assembled at the gathering place, we had to enter a hall. Every family had to approach a desk where an SS man was sitting, I don't remember why. I just remember that when we approached the SS man, he told my father to give him his pocket watch. When my father gave it to him somewhat reluctantly, he grabbed it, and slapped my father's face. Tears came to my eyes, that was the first time I saw somebody hit my father. My sister Mala saw my father being kicked by a Polish supervisor while we were in Labor camp Wieprz. Luckily I didn't see it. When we were at the "Umschlagplatz", they divided us into three groups. The young ones, then an older group, and then the very old. My parents were in the older group. One Nazi in civilian clothes asked the older group "Who has children in the younger group?" My parents and another couple

answered "Our children are in the younger group," the Nazi allowed them to join us. That's how my parents were saved. Many people approached my parents and started to kiss them. This is a miracle, they said, that they you weren't sent away with the older people. There was a Jewish Policeman, that was present at many selections. He said, "I never experienced anything like that". After the selection they put us all in a large hall. Young people, whose parents were deported, were crying bitterly. The scene was heartbreaking. We were all weeping together. Later on, the SS took us to a railway station and transported us to Wadowice ghetto. In the ghetto we were put to work on army uniforms.

My paternal grandmother was still in Zator, her hometown. When she heard the Germans wanted to deport her, she went up the attic and tried to commit suicide by hanging herself, but my Uncle Chaskiel rescued her. I loved my grandmother. We used to call her "Babcia". After so many years, I still think about her sometime, and whenever I do, I cry for her. Later, she too was transferred to Wadowice ghetto.

I don't remember how long we worked in the ghetto. One day they assembled all of us together. The Germans asked each of us, if he knew how to sew. I couldn't lie, and when they asked me, I said "I don't know how to sew". That was the wrong answer. My father was very angry at me. The SS wanted to send me to another place, and leave my family in the ghetto. I was fourteen years old. My parents, my sisters Bella and Mala, my brother Itzek, volunteered to go with me. They sent us to a labor camp, Sucha in Poland. We stayed in Sucha a short time only. All the time we were in Sucha, my Uncle Jakob, who stayed in Wadowice, tried very hard to bring us back to the ghetto. He had connections, because he worked for the Jewish Committee in the ghetto. He even tried to bribe the officers, but to no avail. Had we been sent back to Wadowice, none of us would had survived.

After some time we were transferred to another Labor camp, Wieprz, also in Poland. We worked by a river, carrying sand and stones. They gave us a tiny room for six people. We stayed there until May 1943. My oldest sister, Zlatka, who was in Wadowice with

her husband, Shaul, wrote us that my brother-in-law was dying. My mother got a permit to travel to the ghetto. He died while she was there. She told us later: his last words were "I don't want to die." He was only thirty-five years old. No matter how hard it was for my mother to leave her daughter Zlatka alone, she had to return to Wieprz. We all cried when my mother returned, that's all we could do. We didn't know then, that this would not be the worst of it, that worse things were in store for us. It didn't take long, when the SS came for us again. It was May 8, 1943.

They put us on a train, destination SosnowieŁ, Poland. Transit camp Srodula. We went through a selection. The older and old people separately, and the young ones separately. This time my father was not so lucky. The few years under the Nazi occupation had aged him, before his time. He was only fifty-six, but looked like ninety. He shaved his gray hair and shaved his face, but this did not help. He knew, he was doomed, he was aware of it, and we knew it, too.

My brother Itzek, was sent to a concentration camp. The next day was another selection. A Nazi officer looked and looked at us. When he saw my mother (my mother was the oldest in the group). He asked her: "Was machst du hier? (What are you doing here?)" My mother answered, pointing at us, "Das sind meine drei Töchter." ("These are my three daughters.") The Nazi looked to his right and then to his left. Seeing that nobody was watching him, said "Soll die Mutter gehn mit den Töchtern zusammen". ("Let the mother go together with her daughters.") That's how my mother was saved. After the selection, they put us in a hall of a tall building. My father was ^{ONE} floor above us, waiting for deportation. We were happy that my mother was saved, but we all cried for my father. I cried the most, all day and all night long. There was a woman there, who had lost her mind, and was screaming terribly through the night. Her screaming and my crying intermingled, and made that night the worst of my life. Ever since that night I had nightmares, and screamed at night for years. Somehow we found the strength to go down and say goodbye to my father. He was waiting for us.

Fifty-four years later, I expressed it this way:

Walking in the street I had a flashback. I saw my father's tortured eyes, when I said goodbye to him, before he was sent to that place of no return. I saw his skinny figure leaning on the wall in a corner of the building, both of us not knowing what to say. I remember saying words, (which probably made no sense to him). I know I said something, but I don't remember what. I know I was crying. I could not express what I felt. I wrote a letter to my father and handed it to him. I am sorry, I don't remember the contents of that letter.

During the night, we heard a group of men coming down the stairs; my father was among them. Sometime later, we heard the whistling of a train. Even today, when I hear a train whistling, a shudder goes through my body. After a few hours there was a rumor, that one of the men had a heart attack, and died. We wished it were our father, at least he would have died a natural death.

On my father's yahrzeit in 1997, I wrote the following:

Today is my father's yahrzeit, the day he was deported, fifty-four years ago. I am looking at the flickering yahrzeit lamp and start to remember, the most horrible day of my life. Tears come to my eyes, and then I start to cry like a little girl.

At the time, we were being sent to a camp in Germany, the Germans liquidated Wadowice ghetto. My grandmother with my Uncle Chaskiel, my oldest sister Zlatka, my Uncle Jakob with his wife and daughter, (their son was in concentration camp for five years, he was killed just before the liberation.) They were all deported to Auschwitz, none of them survived.

We had an Aunt Rifka, her husband and five children in Kielce, I remember three of the children's names, Esther, Bairish and Moishe. They all perished, including my two twin brothers. In 1997, the Red Cross informed us, that my brother Itzek, perished in Buchenwald. He became ill with dysentery, and died on March 12, 1945 at 7:45 p.m.,

just two months before the end of war. At least we can observe his yahrzeit, which falls on Nissan 28, according to the Jewish calendar.

In 1997, I wrote this in memory of my family and relatives:

I am crying, suddenly, they all stand before my eyes. My father, my sister, her husband, two brothers, my grandmother, and all the aunts, uncles and cousins. What do they want? I do not know what to do with their images... Maybe if I grieve for all of them; they will let go of me. But, how do I grieve for so many?

After my father was taken away from us, there was this fear in me, that they may take away my mother, too, any day. The fear stayed with me, until the end of the war. Sometimes I think, my father would had survived, had he gone to a concentration camp, but I know otherwise. My father could not tolerate any hunger and he could not control himself. While being in labor camp, Wieprz, my mother cooked for us a meal after work, to take it with us the following day. She put the food in a pot and all of us shared the meal, which meant, my parents, my brother, two sisters and myself. My father was hungry all the time, and I saw him approaching the pot several times, to take a bite. It must have been very painful for him, and I can imagine how he felt, taking away food from us, but he could not control himself. It's very painful to me to write about it, but now I know my father could not had survived a concentration camp.

We were on a train going to a Labor camp in Freiburg, Germany. There were maybe one hundred twenty to one hundred fifty girls or young women in our group. Freiburg turned out to be the best of all the camps we had been to. The camp commandant treated us humanly, but the German authorities sent her for a special training and when she came back, she was not the same. Still she was not cruel and didn't beat us. We were living in a big hall, and on Sundays, we were allowed to socialize together. We didn't have much to eat, but we were not starving. My mother worked in the camp kitchen, so she was able to help us, sometime.

I remember I wrote an essay and read it one Sunday, in front of all the girls. I still had it in Bielsko in 1945, after the liberation. There was a Jewish Committee in Bielsko, and one of the members (with the help of my sister Bella) urged me to put it into the Archives. I don't know if it is still in Poland or maybe they sent it to Yad-Vashem. We were in Freib~~urg~~ a few months only. During our stay there a few things happened. There was a Nazi officer there, wearing a black uniform. He liked my sister Bella. He wanted to save her, and suggested, she should run away with him. She declined, and thank God, he didn't bother her anymore.

A group of men came to our camp, but they were put into separate barracks. A few of our girls found their brothers among them. The joy was so great, when they saw each other. The men were starved, and our commandant, felt sorry for them, and gave them food. She took it away from our portions. Naturally we were now more hungrier.

~~Once again we~~ ^{we} worked in a spinning factory. I remember working with a German woman, who taught me how to operate a machine. She asked me what religion I was, I said "I am Jewish", she was very surprised, and said in German "Wir haben gemeint dass die Juden ^{HABEN} horne" ("She thought the Jews had horns"). There probably were not many Jewish people in Freiburg, before the war. The only Jews they saw, must have been through the "Sturmer", the Nazi propaganda newspaper.

There were some gentiles Polish girls in our camp. Two of them were sent to Auschwitz, as punishment. They came back and told us they met our sister Zlatka. They told her about us, and she sent us regards. Unfortunately, not long after that, she became very ill, and was sent to a hospital, from where she never returned. The Nazis injected some kind of fluid into her veins, and she died. These were devastating news for us, but we had to go on.

We still had some personal belongings with us, and the Polish girls wanted them. They said "What do you need them for, you won't survive anyway? I don't know if they survived, but we sure did.

The next Labor camp we were sent to, was Egelsdorf, Germany. Once more we worked in a spinning factory, only this time we lived in the same place we worked. We were very isolated. The only people we came in contact with, were the people we worked with. The camp was more like a prison. I remember, looking out the window on Sundays, it was so beautiful outside, ^{but} not for us. We spent a very short time there.

I have a recollection, while working at the spinning machine. I started to think and my thoughts turned to God. The more I thought about God, the angrier I got at Him... The thought of being angry at God, scared me, and I tried to suppress it. After a long struggle I did succeed, but I know my faith was shattered then, and it has been ever since.

After sometime we were told, they will have to send us away, because there is no more work for us. Our next destination was supposed to be Auschwitz. We were ordered to pack and be ready the next morning. We knew what it meant to be sent to Auschwitz, and we prayed to God, it shouldn't happen. God must have heard our prayers, because there came an order during the night, to send us to another labor camp, Rohrsdorf, in Germany. Rohrsdorf was a larger camp, and there were girls from many countries. The camp was also a stricter one.

WORKED

We worked in a spinning factory again. In the beginning, my mother in the kitchen and was able to help us. I remember, ^{ONE} ~~an~~ evening, after we returned from work, my mother came in and brought us some potatoes. I'll never forget the look of envy in some of the girls' eyes. I felt so bad and said to myself "I'd rather starve than feel this way." I didn't say anything to my mother, I didn't want to hurt her feelings. I knew she risked punishment, and she couldn't help everybody anyway, she was grateful, she could help us. After awhile the camp commandant put my mother to work in a shop. The supervisor was an older civilian German. He treated my mother quite well, and this helped her to survive.

There was a young girl in the camp, we knew her very well. She became very ill and died suddenly. Not long after that, many Nazi officers came to our camp, from Gross-Rosen. They told us, the camp was being converted into a concentration camp, and from now on we'll belong to Gross-Rosen. Every inmate got a number, and we were to wear it on our necks. A number was printed on a piece of round leather and hung on a string. This was to the addition of the yellow Star of David. They also brought with them many female SS guards. We had to ask permission to go to the bathroom. Years later, I remember two of the female guards, on a huge photograph in Yad-Vashem.

The winter of 1944-45 was approaching. We heard sounds of artillery not far away. Somebody told us, the Russians are close by, but they were not close enough for us. The Germans sent us on a march to another concentration camp, Kratzau in Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia. We marched two days in the snow and very cold weather, without the proper shoes. We slept in a barn, and could hardly walk the next morning. They distributed bread, one loaf per four people. We were lucky, we got another one, because they forgot that we had received one already. This helped us to survive the march. The next day was harder to walk, and we had to help each other, in order not to fall. The guards that accompanied us, were older German men. They not beat us or threaten to kill us.

When we were on the march to Kratzau, Dr. Mengele, "The angel of death" came to look at us. I don't know what he was doing there? He probably was on the run, escaping from the Allies. He had one look at us and said: "Ihr seid verflucht jung" (Your are damn young."). He asked one very young girl: "Wie alt bist du? (How old are you?)". I cannot recollect what she answered him. He then said: "Hast du auch so gesagt in Auschwitz? (Did you say the same in Auschwitz?)", and then he was gone. He was probably sorry, he didn't have the power anymore, to do anything to us.

After two days we arrived in Kratzau. The minute we came in, we noticed right away that this is a different kind of a camp. This one was hell compared to the other camps. There were girls there, who were in Auschwitz before, and claimed that this camp is

worse, except there was no crematoria. The camp commandant was horrible. She didn't let us sleep at night. For every little transgression she punished us by having us kneel on our knees the whole night. The lavatories were so filthy, it was impossible to enter.

We worked in an ammunition factory. We had to get up very early in the morning, it was still dark, and stand a long time in line to get a little black coffee and a piece of bread. That was all we got for the whole day. At night we got some soup. Everybody was starving at this place. The first couple of weeks, my mother worked in the kitchen, but couldn't help us. Later on they sent her to work with us. Luckily we only stayed in that camp three months, until the liberation. If we had to stay any longer, I doubt if many of us would have survived.

I remember one morning the camp commandant beat up everybody. She slapped me in the face so hard, that I staggered. This was a show for her, and she enjoyed and got satisfaction from it. The only time we had some peace, was when she was busy with her lover.

There was a lot of Hungarian Jewish girls in the camp. She called them "schweine" (pigs), and us she called "halb schweine" (half pigs). They used the eating bowls, for food and also as toilets. The Hungarian Jews were not long in the concentration camp. One came pregnant to the camp, the commandant let her have the baby. After she gave birth, she sent her to work and poisoned the baby. It's unbelievable that after the liberation, a couple of Jewish girls saved her, and they ran away with her.

My sister Bella became very ill with typhus. She had to go to the camp hospital. My mother still had a pair of valuable earrings, and traded them for a loaf of bread and a kilo of sugar. This saved my sister's life. They took away all my sister's clothing. When she came back from the hospital, she got some old clothes, and a pair of shoes. One shoe was flat and the other had a high heel. That's how she had to walk to work. A couple of weeks before the war ended, representatives of the Red Cross came to our camp and distributed food packages. There was food in the packages, it had been a long time since

we had seen food, we had not eaten for a very long time. Then on May 7, 1945, the camp commandant came in and said: "You are about to be set free", I don't remember how we reacted... She was not afraid to face us, but nobody took revenge. I cannot explain why.

On May 8, 1945, the war was over. We were told in the morning, that the Germans wanted to blow up our camp, with us in it. The Czech Resistance came and saved us, and a friend and I walked out on the road. While walking, we suddenly saw few dead bodies lying along the road, there was a baby among them. We didn't know who they were, and who had killed them.

After we walked a little farther, we saw Russian tanks approaching. The soldiers came very close and smiled at us. We were very happy to be free at last, but I must say, that the Russians were not liberators to us. They came to our camp in the evening, to have a good time with the girls. They did not ask, if we had what to eat, or if we needed anything. I was a witness the next day to an incident involving Russian soldiers. Two Russian soldiers approached two liberated girls from our camp, they wanted to have sex with them. When they refused, the soldiers threw them into the water nearby. The girls didn't know how to swim and almost drowned, luckily somebody passed by and saved them.

A few of us met a Russian-Jewish officer, he was so good to us. He took my mother, the three of us, and a couple of other girls, to a German home. He said to the owner of the house "You take good care of these people, and give them anything they want or need, I hold you personally responsible for them". We stayed there a week or two. When the Czech saw that that we had recuperated enough, they urged us to go back to Poland. We had no choice, there was no other place to go to, and after all we wanted to find out, if any of our family had survived.

One morning we boarded a cattle train that was going to Poland. All of us got sick with diarrhea, because we ate food we were not supposed to. After a couple of days, we

arrived in Bielsko, Poland. The first greeting we received from the Poles we met was ^{A. W.} "A. W. zyjecie" (How come you are still alive)?" Soon we found out, we were the only ones, from the whole family and relatives that survived the Holocaust.

There was a Jewish Committee in Bielsko that helped the Holocaust survivors. They confiscated half of an apartment that belonged to a German woman. We got two and a half rooms for seven people. The three girls that lived with us made their living by sewing. We had no profession, except my sister Bella, she was a bookkeeper. Luckily she got a job, but it was not enough to support all of us. We struggled and most of the time we were hungry, and that was after the war.

I fell ill, we called a doctor and his diagnosis was jaundice. We didn't have enough to buy some better food for me to eat. The girls that lived with us, felt sorry for me and tried to give me some special food. After, I felt better, I went to a doctor for a complete checkup. I looked very bad. I was almost seventeen years old. The doctor asked me if I was thirteen. The Jewish committee sent me to a resort place to recuperate. It was a very good place. I made a few friends, and we had teachers, who gave us lessons and lectures.

When I returned home, my older sister and I started working at home. We met a couple of female Russian officers. They gave us handmade old sweaters. We took them apart, and made beautiful new sweaters. They paid us with food, so that we had enough for all of us. It made us feel good, that we could support ourselves. My sister Bella, met a young, nice man, named David. They fell in love with each other and married in Bielsko, October 1945.

One evening, a friend of ours came running to us, he was very frightened and said, "They are killing Jews again". He lived in a village not far away from us, some men came to his house and threatened to kill him, if he didn't leave the place. Even though the war was over, there was also at that time a pogrom, in Kielce, Poland, and many Jews were killed.

We decided to leave Poland. We had to go to Germany, that was the only place where there were organizations to help DP'S (Displaced Persons), that's what Holocaust survivors were called in Germany, after the war. In order to get to Germany, we had to be smuggled through the Czech border. We hired a guide to take us. We left at night, so nobody would notice us. He took us through a forest, suddenly, we heard shooting. I don't know if the Czech soldiers shot at us, or in the air, but the guide got scared and ran away, leaving us all alone, in the woods at night. We didn't know which direction to go, so we started walking forward. After we walked for a while, we heard voices, speaking in German. We knew we had reached the German border. We slept that night in a hotel. From there we traveled to Bamberg, Bavaria. My brother-in-law, David had connections there. Right away we got a room with a German family. My sister and husband got another place to live. We got help from U.N.R.A. Later on my sister Mala got a job in one of the offices of the U.N.R.A., a few months later I got a job in the same place. We went to school at night and took some courses. One day we received very good news. We found out that our sister Yetka⁴⁴⁰ had been in Russia, ~~and~~ had survived with her husband. ~~We~~ were overjoyed. They surprised us when one day, they arrived with their beautiful little daughter. Her name was Lusia, and she was born in Russia.

We had another joyous event. My sister Bella gave birth to a baby girl, and they named her Lottie, after my oldest sister Zlatka who had perished in the Holocaust. We moved to a larger apartment and lived all together. We even had a German maid. We had friends, and I must say life was good.

Sometime later my sister Bella, her husband David, and the baby moved to Darmstadt, Germany. David enrolled in the Institute of Technology in Darmstadt. They stayed there a few years, till they emigrated to the U.S.A. We registered to emigrate to the U.S.A., too. We had an aunt and an uncle there, and they wanted us to come. We were aware there was no future for us in Germany, after the Holocaust.

We lived three years in Bamberg. In 1948 our American cousin came to visit us. He belonged to a group that wanted to make Aliya to Israel. He persuaded my sister Mala

and me, to join them. We agreed to volunteer and leave with him. At the end of October 1948, we boarded a train to France, and from there we took a plane to Israel.

It is hard to explain the feeling we felt when we stepped on Israeli soil. The next day we were asked, if we wanted to go into the army or join a kibbutz. We chose to join the Kibbutz. The name of the Kibbutz's was Gal-Ed, near Haifa. We stayed in the Kibbutz for several months, until my mother, my sister Yetka (who was pregnant), her husband Lolo and their daughter came to Israel. We joined them in Tel-Aviv. The Jewish Agency gave us an apartment in an abandoned Arab house.

We were eager to start a new life, in a Jewish country, our country, the State of Israel.

The End

EPILOGUE

I had this emotional need to write the "Memories of the Holocaust", and to mention all names of my family and relatives, in order to validate their existence. I had written that all of them stood before my eyes and demanded something. I felt that by mentioning, and grieving for them, one by one, I put them to rest. Now, when they stand before my eyes, I feel they are at rest, and so am I.

